

HINDERING Discipleship

LUKE 14.25-33

Last week we looked at three men who considered becoming disciples of Jesus. (**Matt. 8.18-22; Luke 9.57-62**)

Each seemed to have a sincere desire to follow Christ, but each one also had something in their lives that threatened to keep them from discipleship.

1. Finance – concerned about a house and the comforts of life.
2. Family – He wanted to go bury his father before following Christ.
3. Favors – of life. He was hesitant to turn his back on those things that had made him happy for so long.

Neither Matthew nor Luke tells us the outcome of these men who had this discussion with Jesus. Maybe they are models of those who failed to live up to the calling of discipleship. Or maybe they listened to the teachings of their lord and master and followed as He commanded.

Whatever the case may have been with them, they had not seriously considered all of the costs required of one who would become a disciple of Christ.

The point I wanted to make from that sermon and from this entire series is that salvation and discipleship are synonymous. You cannot have one without the other.

We will look further into this idea this morning as we look at the teachings of Jesus concerning discipleship in **Luke 14**.

Read Luke 14.25-33

Luke 14 begins with Jesus being invited to eat the Sabbath lunch with a chief Pharisee. The meal was most certainly prepared the day before and requires only serving.

It was common during the time for many people to attend such a meal – many of them not invited, but tolerated as long as they did not interfere with the events in the home.

The Jewish leaders took advantage of these opportunities for demonstrating their knowledge of the Law by teaching on some point or to impress the people of Israel with how important they were in the community. Even the seating arrangement around the table spoke volumes of who was who among the elite.

This is not Jesus' first meal in the home of a Pharisee. In **Luke 7.36**, Jesus eats a meal in the home of a Pharisee named Simon.

As soon as Jesus sat or reclined at the table, a woman of the street – “a sinner” – brought an alabaster box filled with fragrant oil with which she anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped them dry with her hair.

In **Luke 14**, no sooner had Jesus entered the house than He met a man with dropsy. It is certain the man was not a part of the dinner party, because the Pharisees believed that anyone so afflicted was suffering the result of sin in their lives.

Based on the end of verse 1, **they watched him closely**, there is some speculation that the Pharisees set up this encounter between Jesus and the man with the disease on this Sabbath day to test Jesus and see if He would heal the man.

And Jesus did heal him. Yet the Pharisee and his guests were silent.

During the supper, Jesus told a parable (**v. 16-24**) concerning a man who had invited his friends to a great supper. Implied in the invitation is that his friends accepted the invitation.

On the day of the supper, the man sent his servant to see each guest who had earlier committed to attend. Now, each one made an excuse for why he could not attend.

1. Recently purchased some new land
2. Recently purchased new oxen
3. Recently acquired a new wife

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None of these things in themselves were inherently evil things. The condemnation was not in the excuse, for all of these things are acceptable elements of life.

The condemnation comes because they used these every day events to refuse the invitation to come and dine. So the master of the house declared (**v. 24**), “None of those men who were invited will ever taste of my supper.”

This parable has most often been used to make an evangelistic appeal. The point is that the master of the house is God and He has made an invitation to salvation. Those who were invited refused, and thus lost their opportunity for heaven.

And I am certain that that is the meaning behind the text. Yet as soon as Jesus told this parable, He turned to the multitude that followed Him and spoke the words of today’s text.

The scene seems to have changed suddenly from the house of the Pharisee to the street, but that is not necessarily what happened in this scene.

The multitudes followed Jesus everywhere He went, and, as custom would have it, it would not have been unusual for the crowd to have been standing in the doorway and leaning in the windows of the house to witness this encounter between Jesus and the chief Pharisee.

Whatever the setting, Luke placed today’s text immediately after the parable of the great supper to make a point.

This multitude which followed Jesus was not made up of believers who were considering whether they ought to take the next step and become disciples.

These were lost people who followed Jesus because they were curious about the Messiah and the message of one who claimed the authority to forgive sins.

Now Jesus spoke to this multitude:

Luke 14:26 If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.

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The challenge for us with a statement like this is that we fail to comprehend the meaning because we get caught up in the semantics – in the words and their meanings.

- What did Jesus mean by “hate”? Certainly He did not mean that we were to express a malicious attitude towards our family.
- Why use the word hate anyway since the meaning of the word is “love less”? Why not just say “love less”?

Well, in a parallel verse, Jesus did say it something like that...

Matt. 10:37 He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

And that is the same sentiment that Jesus intended in this verse in Luke.

The problem we have is that, as soon as we hear that we don’t have to hate our family, we breathe a sigh of relief and everything from there on out is ignored or we continue to ask questions:

- Since hate means “to love less,” then what is the degree to which I am to love my family less?
- On a scale of 1-10, if I love Jesus at 10, can I love my family at 9 and still qualify as a disciple?
- What is the least that I can do to satisfy this requirement for discipleship?

First of all, let me tell you that the Bible does not use the word “hate” because the Holy Spirit is trying to confuse you.

Secondly, the Holy Spirit did not use the word “hate” here because the word hate does not really mean hate.

Jesus used the word hate to indicate that the level of love you have for Christ must be so much greater than that for your family that it appears to the world and possibly even to your family that you do hate them.

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The love a disciple has for Christ is so much greater than that he has for his family, that there is no comparison. Around the world, there are millions who have made just that choice.

Even here in America, a person from a Catholic background may be rejected by their family for accepting the teaching of salvation as we teach it. You may even know someone who has had that experience.

Even your own life is to be forfeited for the sake of Christ – for those who come to Christ for salvation.

Luke 14:27 And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.

I may make some of you mad with this statement, but “bearing his cross” does not refer to sickness, unruly children, a hard-to-live-with spouse, a terrible boss, an unhappy work situation, poverty, discrimination, a handicap, or anything along those lines.

A cross is an instrument of death. It was the most cruel form of capital punishment of its day and was reserved mostly for those who had committed the most horrendous crimes.

We have taken this tool of death and turned it into an icon or at least jewelry. For us, there is little concept of what it means to “bear his cross.”

The cross represented to the people of Jesus’ time only one thing – death. Period.

Salvation requires belief – a confidence in Christ that is so secure that we are willing to go anywhere and do anything in spite of the risk.

Rev 12:11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.

Message: They defeated him through the blood of the Lamb and the bold word of their witness. They weren’t in love with themselves; they were willing to die for Christ.

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Isaac Watts wrote this hymn in 400 years ago:

Give me the wings of faith to rise
within the veil, and see
the saints above, how great their joys,
how bright their glories be.

Once they were mourning here below,
and wet their couch with tears;
they wrestled hard, as we do now,
with sins and doubts and fears.

I ask them whence their victory came;
they with united breath,
ascribe their conquest to the Lamb,
their triumph to his death.

They marked the footsteps that he trod,
his zeal inspired their breast,
and, following their incarnate God,
possess the promised rest.

Our glorious Leader claims our praise
for his own pattern given;
while the long cloud of witnesses
show the same path to heaven.

-Isaac Watts

Where and when in history did salvation become such a cheap commodity that we believe it requires nothing of us but a head acknowledgment, a short prayer, a baptism, and we are set for eternity?

We scoff at Muslims who will strap a bomb around their bodies and blow themselves up for what they believe about eternity.

Yet we, as Christians, can see little correlation between our profession and our actions.

Jesus is calling the multitude that followed Him to salvation. He said that in order to be a part of the kingdom you must leave your family and friends behind and be willing to die if necessary.

And thirdly...

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Luke 14:33 *So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.*

Three times Jesus uses that phrase “cannot be my disciple.”

Three times is one method of making an emphatic statement. Jesus is being very clear in these verses. He is not leaving any wiggle room for anyone to work around the commitment required of those who would know Christ as Lord and Savior.

Someone said that both God and Satan are humored when a man uses the word “mine” to refer to his possessions.

The things we call ours were not ours before we acquired them and they will not be ours after we die. So what do we mean by working ourselves to death to own them and to keep them?

Philippians 3:7 *What things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. 8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ.*

Luke 14.33 begins with “likewise,” indicating that something came before it to which this point is being compared.

Verses 28-30: a builder began to build a tower with great design and enthusiasm, yet failed to look at the long term and was required to quit building with his work only half done.

The people around who were watching began to mock him. “He cannot finish that which he began.”

They said, “See, he claimed to be born again – to be a Christian. But there certainly isn’t any evidence of Christ in his everyday walk. Why would I want to be part of a religion like that?”

Verses 31-32: A king went out to war without first sending his spies to ascertain the strength of the enemy he faced. As a result, he had to sue for peace or face destruction.

How much faith would we have in a leader so rash as to make such an enormous commitment without counting the cost of his

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plan? His responsibility was to defend the country, but he could not because he failed to understand the situation.

The builder was so intent on the tower that he neglected the work that would have assured its completion.

The king was so intent on victory that he failed to prepare for the battle that always precedes the victory.

Ann and I went to a fast food restaurant last week and noticed an employee coming in with food orders from another restaurant for the workers in the kitchen.

There is nothing wrong with that, but it could lead to a question.

If you are not consuming what you are trying to sell to others, how can you expect others to have any desire for what you are selling?

If the Ford salesman is driving a Chevrolet, it says a great deal about the trust he has in his product he is trying to sell and the trust that I should have in it.

We are so caught up in the gifts of salvation – forgiveness of sin, eternal life, heaven, peace – that we have neglected the task that God has given us of discipleship during our everyday lives.

We promote salvation as if it were all about the gift.

This question is not original with me, but it bears asking: Would we still have a desire for heaven if only the gifts of salvation were there, but God was not?

Salvation for many means that there is an accounting ledger of righteousness in heaven. Ours pages are filled with debts. Christ’s ledger is filled with credits.

God checks our minds to see if we’ve expressed our belief in His gift of atonement and if so, He transfers the credits of Christ’s grace to our ledger, and we are debt free.

Then all is well – whether we ever express trust in Him for the remainder of our lives or not.

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Salvation is not a momentary issue or one that deals only with the afterlife. Salvation is being born again into a new life – a new creation – with God as our Father.

What kind of father would a man be if the only interaction he required of his child was birth and death and nothing in between?

To be a disciple means that someone else is your teacher. For the Christian, our teacher is Christ through the Holy Spirit.

We sing a song entitled “I Am a Friend of God.”

I wonder what we mean when we sing that.

There is a reference where Jesus’ detractors made fun of Him by saying that He was a friend of sinners because He spent time with them.

But because Jesus befriended sinners does not make those sinners friends of God.

The phrase “friend of God” is used only once in Scripture to refer to Abraham.

James 2:23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” And he was called the friend of God.

What does it mean “Abraham believed God”?

Did Abraham believe...

- That his sins were forgiven?
- That he would go to heaven when he died?
- That he had eternal life?

The answer is none of the above.

Abraham believed God when God promised that Abraham would be the father of a son who would produce so many descendants for Abraham that they could not be numbered. (**Gen. 15.3-6**)

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Then several years later, Abraham took this his only son to the top of Mt. Moriah to sacrifice him as God had commanded him. Of course, we know that God provided a ram as a sacrifice in the place of Isaac.

Yet here was Abraham demonstrating that his belief in God was not a momentary event. It continued throughout his life until his death.

Friendship with God does not begin with salvation, but derives from obedience to His will and His commandments over a lifetime. Even Abraham was not labeled “friend of God” during his lifetime.

There was a time when Jesus referred to His disciples as friends. You can read about it in **John 15.14-15**.

Yet He called them friends only after they had spent three years of intense on-the-job training and had proven their commitment by obedience to His commandments and by carrying out His directions.

Salvation is not a one-moment experience, but a life committed to God through Christ and empowered by the indwelling and filling of the Holy Spirit.